

This record is a partial extract of the original cable. The full text of the original cable is not available.

UNCLAS SECTION 01 OF 03 MANAMA 000444

SIPDIS

DEPT FOR NEA/PI AND NEA/ARP
CAIRO FOR STEVE BONDY

E.O. 12958: N/A

TAGS: [KMPI](#) [EAID](#) [ECON](#) [PREL](#) [KPAO](#) [BA](#)

SUBJECT: MEPI FY 2004 FUNDING RECOMMENDATIONS

REF: A) STATE 055472, B) 03 MANAMA 2921, C) 03 MANAMA 2391

1. (U) Post's MEPI working group met on March 23 to review ref A. The following is the Mission's response.

CROSS PILLAR

2. (U) Post's MEPI working group is considering four MEPI small grants. Post will advise MEPI of details via email per reftel.

ECONOMIC PILLAR

3. (U) In conjunction with the FTA negotiation process, a U.S. interagency team is coordinating with the Government of Bahrain to identify and prioritize Bahrain's trade-related technical assistance needs to implement FTA effectively.

4. (U) Post welcomes the continued funding of the MEET U.S. program. Last year, post sent two participants to the MEET U.S. hospital administration program. The program was timely, giving post the opportunity to respond positively to a Ministry of Health request for USG technical assistance to foster its hospital administration reorganization. Post has one request in conjunction with the MEET U.S. program: paperwork reduction. Given stretched resources at post (which will only be stretched further with FTA implementation), it would be helpful if the officer paperwork required to follow up on the interview process could be reduced to a single page of the most pertinent information (e.g., officer assessments, vice information already covered in the candidates' paperwork) that the Washington MEET U.S. team needs to make its candidate selection. This reduction will make it easier for busy posts to review and submit applications for the program.

POLITICAL PILLAR

NDI CONTINUES TO BE IN HIGH DEMAND

5. (U) Post fully supports funding for regional campaign schools.

6. (U) NDI's solid reputation for delivering quality programming is attracting demand for NDI's services from across Bahrain's political spectrum. The Secretary General of Bahrain's Supreme Council for Women recently asked NDI's local representative to develop a training program for women active in politics. The Minister of the Royal Court, who sponsors NDI's presence in Bahrain, invited NDI to develop a curriculum to train government officials to respond more effectively to parliamentary questioning and other requirements of a democratic government. National Assembly members highly value NDI's activities and are constantly asking EMBOFFs to increase NDI interventions with Assembly members and staff. More recently, Bahrain's constellation of political societies asked NDI's local representative to facilitate a "retreat" to foster dialogue on the country's political future. We think this event could begin a process that could heal the split in Bahrain's political elite that emerged after the promulgation of the 2002 constitution. Post encourages NEA/PI to make a large allocation to NDI to support the development of political organizations in Bahrain.

7. (SBU) On March 25, NDI permanently transferred parliamentary specialist Audrey McLaughlin from Bahrain to Morocco because of insufficient funds to support her presence here. McLaughlin's departure leaves a large hole in our democracy support line-up and limits our ability to respond to demand. We hope NEA/PI can increase funding for NDI democracy support activities this fiscal year. NDI is, right now, the only quality service provider in town. If it cannot meet the demand, local officials will turn to NDI's competitors, like UNDP, which provides a higher cost service with very weak democracy content.

HERE WE GO AGAIN - IFES

18. (U) Election Assistance (IFES). Post can support a senior IFES official's visit to approach GOB officials to offer a project assessment. If the GOB formally accepts this offer, the Embassy can support the conducting of an IFES study. Bahrain's next elections are scheduled for FY05 and FY06. The GOB is proud of its election administration system and has never asked us, or anyone else for that matter, for assistance to improve what the GOB believes to be a very successful system.

19. (U) IFES also must overcome a significant credibility problem with the GOB. A previous project here ended badly and left some key GOB officials very bitter towards the organization. (see refs B AND C). We feel boosting funding for NDI would be a better use of additional MEPI democracy spending in Bahrain.

PARLIAMENTARY STRENGTHENING - ONE NGO ONLY, PLEASE

110. (U) Post has reviewed this IRI proposal, of which the bulk of its funding goes to Morocco and Jordan. Secondary project goals for the Gulf States encourage multi-party political systems and increase the numbers of candidates for political office. NDI Program Manager Fawzi Guleid has been successfully achieving these goals for the last 18 months in Bahrain. Guleid is well-respected and a much sought after commodity in Bahraini society. Post strongly suggests that MEPI increase funding to NDI for parliamentary strengthening activities, rather than introduce another U.S. NGO. Bahrain is a small place and we have a small embassy with limited resources. Supporting more than two major political activities here (NDI and ABA) is beyond current Embassy resources to oversee.

JUDICIAL REFORM AND THE ABA - A GOOD FIT

111. (U) Judicial and Legal Reform (ABA). MEPI currently funds the American Bar Association's judicial reform project in Bahrain. The four main areas of reform are case management, alternative dispute resolution, prosecutor training and judicial training. The ABA and the Minister of Justice are currently negotiating a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) that outlines how ABA can achieve the goals and objectives of the reform project. Once the MOU is signed between the ABA and the MOJ, Post strongly recommends continued funding for this ABA program.

CIVIC EDUCATION

112. (U) Post strongly supports continuing funding for Arab Civic Education Programs. The Project Director visited Bahrain in February and we are awaiting follow up to the first visit.

MEDIA

113. (U) Post concurs with MEPI's decision to evaluate the results of the InterNews media training program prior to investing further in this project. We welcome other initiatives to support the emergence of a transparent and independent media and to continue to reach out and engage the next generation of media professionals. Post encourages MEPI to consider projects with broad exposure to U.S. media, such as U.S.-based internships for communications students and short-term fellowships/professional development opportunities for established journalists who cannot leave their jobs for a long period of time.

EDUCATION PILLAR

114. (U) Post is awaiting Ministry of Education approval of the "My Arabic Library" program. Representatives from Scholastic Books will visit post April 18-21 to meet with Ministry officials about the program. Depending on the Ministry's response, we may want to participate in expansion of the program to other grade levels.

115. (U) Post strongly supports continued (and increased) funding of the student leaders program. We have had outstanding candidates for these programs and the Ministry of Education and University of Bahrain have emphasized that leadership opportunities for students are among their highest priorities as well. ECA's excellent management and oversight of these programs has been key, in post's view.

116. (U) Post enthusiastically supports the University

Linkages Program and its continuation. We currently oversee two very productive MEPI linkages with the University of Bahrain. (Comment: The University's Vice President recently told the PAO: "We have dozens of relationships on paper with other universities, but the two MEPI linkages are the most successful ones we've had - they are really accomplishing something." Kudos to ECA since both linkages were initiated by former U.S. Fulbright professors who taught at the University of Bahrain.) Post has requested that these linkages be extended in FY 04 via sep email. We appreciate MEPI's rapid response to our request, which included explicit instructions on what the U.S. institutions need to do to apply for extensions.

¶17. (U) Post strongly agrees with MEPI's decision to postpone expansion of CRI in Bahrain. Due to the structure of the Ministry of Education, the Child Centered Schools program is unworkable in Bahrain.

WOMEN'S PILLAR

¶18. (U) Embassy Manama welcomes the opportunity to facilitate the participation of Bahraini women in regional MEPI women's pillar programs.

¶19. (U) Post strongly supports continuation of the Business Internships Program for young business women. It is our understanding that Bahrain will be able to send only one intern during the first year of the program due to funding constraints. Given FTA negotiations and the importance of increasing the private sector in Bahrain, we would like to request that Bahrain be able to send up to three interns in the next year of this program.

NEUMANN